

# Techniques, Processes, and Progress in Joint Action for Missions

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One of the difficulties in promoting Joint Action for Mission is that almost every discussion of it must begin with a definition of what it is and what it is not. In popular parlance almost any example of interchurch cooperation is labeled Joint Action for Mission. But the J.A.M. proposal as formulated at New Delhi in 1961 embodied a number of very specific steps and conditions, in the absence of which J.A.M. in the classical sense can hardly be said to have taken place.

Anyone can be forgiven for misunderstanding the name. In its more general application, the term “joint action” dates back at least to the time of the Edinburgh Conference in 1910. If the integrity of the J.A.M. proposal is to be maintained, perhaps we should find a new designation that will describe it with less confusion. Or perhaps, on the other hand, we should ask ourselves whether we are being too inflexible in trying to insist on all to specifics of the J.A.M. proposal in its classical form. Have we fallen into such a rigid orthodoxy about it that we find ourselves with something on our hands that is extremely difficult to sell or even to communicate? Is it worth the trouble to try to do so? Is there a certain artificiality about the proposal itself? Or is it to such an extent the result of a process of logical development in the history of the Christian mission that, with all its specifics, it represents, under the leading of the Holy Spirit, a necessary next step in Christian advance in our day?

A brief review of the development of the proposal will help to answer this question and place the proposal in proper perspective.

## FROM THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF MISSIONS TO JOINT ACTION FOR MISSION.

The idea of J.A.M. developed out of a study on the Internationalization of Missions carried on by the International Missionary Council over a number of years. The formulation of this topic may be traced back to the Whitby meeting of the I.M.C. in 1947, although the problem of the tension between the national manifestation of the Christian Church and the universal character of the Christian fellowship had been articulated many years before that. With vivid memories of the results of rampant nationalism as experienced in World War II, and faced with the prospect of the explosion of new nationalisms in Asia and Africa with the end of the colonial era, the I.M.C. Committee adopted a European statement on “the ‘Supranationality’ of Mission.”

The Whitby meeting began to face for the first time the implications of the fact that the Christian mission now operated from a worldwide base. That this must mean the transcending of both national and denominational barriers was made clear in a statement on “United Action” which was quite significant for the direction of future development:

“Corporate union cannot be the work of a year or two. But in facing a task too great for all the churches, we must learn new ways of working together. Wherever devotion to local or denominational loyalties stands in the way of response to the larger call of Christ, it must be transcended...Where the pooling of resources promises more rapid advance, tradition must not be allowed to stand in the way. Where new tasks are to be undertaken, churches must be willing to consult together and to take or share responsibility, as the will of God is revealed in answer to their faith and prayer.”<sup>1</sup>

Reviewing the Whitby findings a year later at Oegstgeest, Holland, the I.M.C. Committee emphasized the importance of action in the local situation – an emphasis which was to become a significant element in the J.A.M. proposal. The Whitby vision, the Committee said, “becomes actual only as it finds concrete expression in local situations. We should approach local tasks with an ecumenical vision and approach the world task with a

1 *The Witness of a Revolutionary Church* (Statements issued by the Committee of the International Missionary Council, Whitby, Ont., Canada, July 5-24, 1947, p. 20).

local emphasis. It is therefore an immediate responsibility of the Council to find ways in which this is to be achieved.”<sup>2</sup>

Returning to Whitby, Ontario, in July 1950, the I.M.C. Ad Interim Committee took up the theme again in a statement on Longer-term Adjustments in Missionary Responsibilities:

“The most important thing for us to recognize is that, to use the words from Madras, ‘this is the task primarily of the whole Church for the whole world.’ The task is one. It will require all the resources of all Christians if it is to be successfully prosecuted. Increasingly our plans must be supra-denominational and supra-national, bursting the bonds of denomination, particular society or nation, overleaping the boundaries of older and younger churches, so that the best resources – spiritual, intellectual and material – which can be found anywhere are subject to use where they can be employed most fruitfully. This calls for more coordination, cooperation, and unification in every field, geographical and functional.”<sup>3</sup>

The Willingen meeting of 1952 carried the idea of internationalization a step further with its suggestion of the possibility of international, interracial, interdenominational teams. Following up this lead, the Ad Interim Committee at Staten Island, NY, in 1954, noted that the emergence of churches in all parts of the world “provides a God-given opportunity to broaden the base of the missionary movement thereby demonstrating in new ways the character of the universal Church and meeting the threat to the mission of the Church posed in certain forms of contemporary nationalism.” The officers of the I.M.C. were instructed “to seek to discover what is the present experience of international missionary action whereby the resources of personnel and money as between older and younger churches, or within either of these, are being pooled; what particular problems such action has revealed; what solution to these problems can be advanced; and what opportunities for developing such action on a larger scale appear likely to exist in the immediate future.”<sup>4</sup>

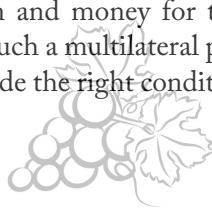
2 Minutes of Committee of the I.M.C., Oegstgeest, Holland, September 7-10, 1948, p. 34.

3 Minutes of the Ad Interim Committee of the I.M.C., Witby, Ont., Canada, July 19-25, 1950, p. 52.

4 Minutes of the Ad Interim Committee of the I.M.C., Wagner College, Staten Island, New York, July 15-24, 1954, p. 38.

This study was taken up by Dr. J. N. Decker, and later by the Rev. Ronald Orchard. The results of Mr. Orchard's study were published in 1959 as an I.M.C. Research Pamphlet under the title "Out of Every Nation." After reviewing various experiments in broadening the base of missionary action, Mr. Orchard concluded that the crucial sphere of action is in the national or more local situation. He rejected the idea of an international pool of financial resources, although he did not necessarily rule out every form of international fund. The giving and use of money, he felt, can be irresponsible unless there goes with it an involvement in a responsible relationship. For similar reasons he rejected the idea of an international pool of personnel. As for demonstration international teams, they would have only limited symbolic value unless the existence of the worldwide base for mission is, in fact, a more significant reality. "The danger of action at the international level," wrote Mr. Orchard, "is that nobody may feel really committed by it. It is altogether too easy to vote for an experiment in internationalization on the international scale the results of which leave the actual Christian mission in any given place essentially unchanged, still consisting of the representatives of one denomination and of one or two nationalities, who continue their work as though they had no neighbours of other denominations and nationalities, and still leaving the local congregation regarding itself as a Christian enclave cut off from its national Community."<sup>1</sup>

In the meantime, Bishop Leslie Newbigin was devoting thought to the problems of partnership between mission boards and the churches to which they were related, especially the problem of paternalism on the one hand and excessive dependence on the other. He saw the solution in the development of multilateral relationships to replace the present system of bilateral relationships. He embodied his ideas in the booklet "One Body One Gospel One World" which was published in late 1958 after a considerable process of discussion. "It is hard to see," he wrote, "how it is possible to develop within the present system of one-track relationships either a greater sense of independence and responsibility among the receiving churches, or greater opportunities for using the immense resources of the Church in men and money for the unfinished task. I submit that the development of such a multilateral pattern of operations as I have described might well provide the right conditions for the solution of



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1 Ronald K. Orchard, *Out Of Every Nation* (I.M.C. Research Pamphlet, 1959, p. 72).

these problems, and that one of the next tasks to be attempted should be a series of limited experiments in selected areas along these lines.”<sup>2</sup>

Bishop Newbigin included the same suggestion in one of the John R. Mott Lectures, which he delivered at the inaugural Assembly of the East Asia Christian Conference at Kuala Lumpur in May 1959. “I have become personally convinced he said, “that nothing will meet our need save the substitution for our present pattern of relationship of a new pattern which will be multilateral rather than bilateral – in which the fundamental principle will be accepted that all have something to give and all have something to receive.” “I am sure,” he added, “that it will only be workable if it is on a regional basis – if churches in adjacent areas get together to think about their common task to consider how they can help each other in it, and what help they need from outside ... I earnestly hope that our deliberations here will help to bring the first elements of detail into this rough outline of a pattern of missionary effort free from a false independence and shaped by a true interdependence.”<sup>3</sup>

The resolutions adopted by the EACC Assembly reflected these ideas and foreshadowed the later J.A.M. proposal. The Conference’s Committee on Inter-Church Aid for Mission and Service, among its other tasks, was given the responsibility for:

“Assisting member councils and churches wishing to initiate in their area a joint effort by the churches and related foreign mission agencies to look together at the missionary task in that area and at the resources available for meeting it with a view to the most effective deployment of those resources and the development of the maximum sense of responsibility in the churches of the area. It is recognized that this may lead to modifications in the present bilateral relationships between mission boards and younger churches and the development of more ecumenical patterns of mission in which resources of personnel and funds would be made available, irrespective of denomination, to those churches in Asia which desire to use them. Special attention should be given to situations

2 Leslie Newbigin, *One Body, One Gospel, One World*, International Missionary Council, 1958, p. 30.

3 Leslie Newbigin, *A Decisive Hour for the Christian Mission*, (SCM Press, London, 1960), p. 42.

where more than one mission agency is related to a single church.”<sup>1</sup>

These ideas were further developed by I.M.C. staff, and finally there emerged the document on “Joint Action for Mission” which was presented to the World Council of Churches at New Delhi in 1961.

What, then, is Joint Action for Mission? Essentially, it is a redeployment of resources on the part of the churches working *in a particular geographical area*. It is not “cooperative work” in the ordinary sense of the term, where two or more churches agree to pool resources for the carrying out of a given function, whether in a limited area or on a regional, national, or world basis. Joint Action for Mission involves in a more limited geographical area, a radical review, and redeployment in relation to the *whole* mission of the Church.

Neither does it mean a complete *pooling* of resources. It is not a matter of putting all the money in a common pot and all the work under one administrative structure. Cooperative structures may be set up to carry certain functions. For certain other functions one church may, by common agreement, act on behalf of all.

Joint Action for Mission is carried out in a succession of specific steps:

1. **Joint Survey.** The churches within the area (together with their related mission agencies) together survey the needs and opportunities confronting them in the area, and the total resources available to meet them.
2. **Joint Planning.** The process of survey is followed by a consultation of the churches and mission agencies in the area, aimed at securing a real and effective redeployment of resources in the area in the light of the agreed goals.
3. **Joint Action.** The findings of the consultation are implemented in definite action.

The implementation of such a plan is admittedly a formidable task. Overcoming the natural inertia and the vested interests of the institutional church is difficult enough in itself. The difficulty is compounded when

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1 *Witnesses Together* (Edited by U. Kyaw Than), East Asia Christian Conference, 1959, p. 92.

what is demanded is a deliberate sacrifice of denominational self-interest, and the willingness of churches to allow their resources to be used across confessional lines. Faith and order problems are inevitably involved if J.A.M. penetrates (as it ought) into the central evangelistic thrust of the Church's mission. When the J.A.M. proposal was discussed at the Mexico City meeting of the C.W.M.E. in December 1963, the question was seriously raised as to whether J.A.M. is possible at all in the absence of complete, organic Church union. The conclusion reached was that church union is not necessarily a prerequisite condition. Where there is a seriousness about mission and a sensitiveness to the scandal of disunity and a willingness to sacrifice vested interests, there is much that can be done even in the present separateness of the churches, although participation in J.A.M. must inevitably point up the urgent desirability of moving to that full unity which is our ultimate objective. On the other hand, it is possible to have organic union without Joint Action for Mission. There are examples in Asia of churches which have been united for years, but in which the original separate units still maintain their separate relationships to their traditional supporting mission agencies with no provision for common strategy.

## STEPS TOWARD IMPLEMENTATION

No one has cause for complaint that we are proceeding with unseemly haste to put the J.A.M. idea into practice. Indeed one sometimes overhears rather cynical comment on the tortuous pace of progress. But those who framed the proposal were never under any illusion about the difficulties involved in implementing it. It was envisaged that during the first few years after New Delhi, experiments might be undertaken in a limited number of areas. At Mexico City the staff of the Division of World Mission and Evangelism were instructed to seek to stimulate at least one program of J.A.M. on each of the six continents, and to evoke discussion, consultation and surveys in as many other areas as possible. Discussion there has been. Action to the point of full implementation of a J.A.M. program in the classical sense has been extremely limited.

One of the early steps toward implementation taken after New Delhi was the calling of the three Asian "Situation Conferences" by the EACC in February and March of 1963. The decision to hold the conferences was actually taken at a meeting in Bangalore, India in 1961, just prior to the New Delhi Assembly. Joint Action for Mission was only one of the concerns in the minds of those who planned them. Another was the whole question of confessionalism in Asia, which, of course, impinges

directly on the J.A.M. proposal. Since these were regional conferences, it was impossible to take concrete steps toward J.A.M. in any particular locality. It was a matter of disseminating the idea among a representative group of Asian church leaders

Let us, then, consider what steps have been taken in the direction of J.A.M. in local situations in a few countries:

## India

The planning of joint action within the several administrative units of a single united church hardly constitutes J.A.M. in the strict sense of the word. Some of the problems, however, are similar. The Church of South India is a case in point. The 15 dioceses of the united church still maintained the traditional relationships with supporting mission boards and societies, which were in existence prior to union. The result was a patchwork of relationships to Boards in Britain, Australia, New Zealand, and the U.S.A. The level of outside resources supplied to various units of the Church was quite uneven, and there was no over-all planning as to how the C.S.I. should approach its mission. In 1962, a commission was appointed to make a survey of the total work of the Church. The commission's report recommended that all personnel and funds from the supporting mission agencies be made available through the Synod instead of directly to the dioceses in order to provide for more equitable distribution and common planning. The Synod was unwilling to integrate existing work in this way and decided instead that resources for *new* work only should be channeled through the Synod. More recently the Synod has retreated even from this position, and the dioceses are now in direct relationship with the mission boards again in regard to new, as well as existing work. Meanwhile, the related mission agencies, at the request of the C.S.I., have taken steps to coordinate their work. A committee representing C.S.I. related mission agencies has been meeting in London for some years. A similar committee has been formed in New York, and arrangements have been made for regular and periodic consultation between the two committees. In India, the office of the Synod is being strengthened in personnel. These two factors together may in time open the way to greater coordination. The C.S.I. experiment, however, demonstrates how difficult it is to achieve a genuine redeployment of resources even within a single church where there are no faith and order or confessional problems.

An interesting development between two churches is under way in the State of Madhya Pradesh, between the Chhattisgarh and Orissa Church Council of the U.C.N.I. (related to the United Church of Christ



in the USA) and the adjacent Disciples' Church (related to the Disciples of Christ in the USA). A representative group from the Disciples' Church came to Raipur and made a study of the work of the Chhattisgarh and Orissa Church Council. A group from the latter then went and studied the work of the Disciples. Afterwards a joint consultation was held to discuss possible areas for integration of work. It was decided that the agricultural work of the two churches should be integrated. Consideration is now being given to integration of the educational and medical work. This development came at a time when the Disciples of Christ and the United Church of Christ in the U.S.A. were in the process of integrating all of their overseas work under a single administration. This has undoubtedly had an influence on the situation in India though there seems to have been some readiness on the part of leaders of the Church in India to proceed with the first steps in integration of work there. The Mennonites are considering the possibility of entering the scheme. It will be noted that thus far it is only the service program and institutions of the churches that are affected. The central life of the churches and their evangelistic outreach are not affected.

A more far-reaching program (and one of the most promising to date anywhere) is underway in *Durgapur* in the heart of the industrial belt of Northeast India. Durgapur is a new city, which has grown up in recent years around a developing steel industry. The Methodist Church, which was working in an adjacent area, acquired a property in the new town and built a church. Then the government stepped in and said that only four sites would be made available for churches in Durgapur. One was offered to the Roman Catholic Church and the West Bengal Christian Council was approached regarding the other three. The Methodist Church was confirmed in possession of the site it was occupying and the Anglican Church was given an invitation. From the beginning it was planned that the work should be set up on a Joint Action basis. A survey was carried out by a missionary-sociologist from the Church Missionary Society and a Joint Action for Mission program was drawn up and agreed to by the churches concerned. Part of it is now in effect. The Anglican and Methodist churches are in separate sections of the town. By agreement, each church serves people of all denominations in its district. (The Anglican minister goes to the Methodist Church periodically to give communion to Anglican members.) It is expected that a Baptist church will be established within the same plan. Under the plan the ministers of all the churches, besides caring for their immediate congregations, will function as a team ministry to Durgapur as a whole, and will specialize in such areas as management

problems, labour, and unions, community welfare and development, youth activity, etc.

This is part of a larger plan for the whole northeast industrial belt in Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa. A key element in the plan is the Ecumenical Social and Industrial Institute founded in 1963, with headquarters in Durgapur but serving the whole area. The area has been divided into seven zones. The plan calls for the finding and training of an industrial mission worker for each zone, training of the laity, the establishment of Christian cells of 8 to 10 people each in factories and other segments of community life.

The relative success of the Durgapur project has been due in large part to the fact that it developed in a completely new situation where the churches were not previously entrenched in traditional programs, where there were no vested interests, and where the novelty of India's burgeoning industrial development challenged the churches to try new methods of approach. Yet, if a genuine experiment in J.A.M. can be successfully carried out in an area such as this, perhaps eventually, through a process of cross-fertilization, its influence may reach into some of the centers where the inertia born of long tradition has to be overcome.

## West Pakistan

A consultation on Joint Action for Mission was held in Lahore in November 1963, under the auspices of the West Pakistan Christian Council. Delegates from the major churches and certain other organizations attended. The report of the Madras Situation Conference was used as a basis for the conference, as well as the D.W.M.E. document on Joint Action for Mission. As most of the members of the conference were not too familiar with these ideas, it was largely an educational experience. A number of areas were suggested where joint action by the churches would be useful. There was a tendency to see Joint Action for Mission as adding a few cooperative enterprises to existing work rather than the radical redeployment, which it ought to involve. However, the conference did set up a Continuation Committee on Joint Action for Mission. The Committee met and decided to hold regional conferences at various places in order to extend the educational process to a broader segment of the churches' leadership. A visitor in late 1964 reported that little progress had been made as yet. A great many people had learned something about J.A.M. There was always an initial tendency to think of it as a new name for cooperation in mission. The more people learned as to exactly what was involved in it, the more reasons were produced as to why J.A.M. was

not possible, in West Pakistan at the present time. With the development of the India-Pakistan emergency, and some changes in leadership in the West Pakistan Christian Council, the movement has come to a temporary standstill.

## Taiwan

October 1965 was looked forward to as a time of great promise for ecumenical development in Taiwan. In July the centennial of Protestantism in Taiwan had been celebrated by the churches together. "In the Second Century Together" had been selected as the slogan for the Centennial observance. In October a two-and-a-half day consultation was called at Tainan Theological College to make plans for launching the ecumenical second century. A massive study of the situation facing the churches in Taiwan had been made in advance of the consultation under the direction of the Research and Study Center of Tainan Theological College. Representatives of the mission boards with work in Taiwan, as well as a number of ecumenical consultants, were invited to attend. Many people believed that the stage was set for a major breakthrough in Joint Action for Mission.

The results were a little disappointing. Perhaps too much had been expected of an initial meeting such as this. Perhaps the material was too massive, and the whole of Taiwan was too large an area in which to plan a J.A.M. program. There were other factors in the picture too. Because of the extreme delicacy of the religious and political situation in Taiwan at the time, some of the churches did not feel able to participate in new ecumenical ventures. And, as one observer commented, "those who came to the consultation were committed to 'joint discussion about mission,'" but no one was in a position to make a concrete commitment to Joint Action for Mission. Certain areas for future cooperative action were noted. A continuation committee is exploring the implications of some of the recommendations. Ministry to the mountain tribal population has been identified as one of the major concerns of the churches. A sociological study of this problem will be made with the help of the SASP (Specialized Assistance to Social Projects) Committee of the World Council of Churches. Joint Action for Mission is not necessarily a lost cause in Taiwan. It has not materialized as rapidly as we had hoped. A great deal will depend on the direction which is given to it by the leadership of the churches in the days immediately ahead.

## Australia

The J.A.M. proposal was originally developed with the areas of Asia, Africa, and Latin America in mind, as illustrated by the frequent references in the documents to the related mission boards. Even at this formative stage, however, it was suggested that the proposal might have equal relevance for the churches in what were considered as the “sending” countries in the traditional perspective of “missions.” When the work of the new C.W.M.E. was set fully in the perspective of “mission on six continents” at New Delhi, the implications of this for the J.A.M. proposal became obvious. This was further underlined at the meeting of the C.W.M.E. in Mexico City in December 1963.

Meanwhile, the churches of Australia, though traditionally classified as “sending” churches, enjoyed the advantage of being members of the East Asia Christian Conference and participating fully in the Situation Conference at Singapore in March 1963. Four of the six delegates from Australia were selected from the State of Victoria in the hope that on their return they might be able to collaborate in the development of J.A.M. projects in their home state. They found one or two places where the local situation was already leading people in the direction of J.A.M. and were able to bring the influence of the Situation Conference to bear on them.

One was the new town of Churchill, which is growing up around a power station 90 miles from Melbourne, with a total population of 40,000 expected by the end of the century. Four churches (Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Churches of Christ) are collaborating in the appointment of one minister who has moved in to represent them all. He has begun to hold services in a vacant shop until a church can be built. In this way it is hoped that the Church will grow with the community with the possibility of new insights and openness to the new situation. Members of the church will continue to be members of their own denominations, but will receive the ministry provided by the cooperating churches in common. The minister (who happens to be an Anglican) will be supported in a team ministry by ministers from the neighbouring town of Morwell.

At *Collingwood* there is a Methodist-Presbyterian joint parish in an inner-city area. Anglican participation is being considered. The parish is studying community problems and seeking to relate itself creatively to them. The site of a Presbyterian manse is to be used for a cooperative housing scheme.

At *Mornington* (a seaside resort) an inter-church council, as a result of Bible study and prayer on their responsibility as the people of God

in the area, was led to make a thorough survey of the community. One result was a public meeting with the Shire Council and representatives of the voluntary service agencies, which led to the appointment of a voluntary welfare worker working with a team of ministers and doctors in the service of the community. This, of course, goes no further than a piece of cooperative service on the part of the churches. A proposal is now under consideration for a united parish with Anglican, Presbyterian, and Methodist ministers working as a team.

## The USA

The churches in the U.S.A. have not felt the direct impact of the discussion on J.A.M. in the World Council of Churches. At a number of points, however, developments are taking place, quite independently of the J.A.M. proposal, which bear a good deal of resemblance to it.

The project in Wilmington, Delaware, has already been written up in the *International Review of Missions* (October 1965). It began in 1961 with the vision of the Rev. Donald C. Wilson, pastor of a Presbyterian Church and President of the Council of Churches of Wilmington and New Castle County. He saw a number of inner city congregations ministering in an inadequate and isolated way amid the deteriorating conditions of the inner city while the suburban churches, though concerned about the problems of the city, saw no way of rendering effective help. He gathered the five denominational leaders who were resident in Delaware. They met monthly for almost a year and analyzed the problems. They concluded that the situation could never be met adequately by the churches in isolation. A Department of Metropolitan Mission was formed under the Council of Churches. The city was divided into five regions, and the churches in each region were grouped into larger parishes. Suburban churches, which elected to participate in the program, were yoked with one or another of the larger parishes. Larger parish councils were established which then proceeded, to devise ministries appropriate to the needs of their respective communities. Sometimes a parish-wide approach was adopted, sometimes two or more churches were requested to collaborate, and sometimes a single denomination would be asked to carry a program on behalf of all.

In *Chicago* the North Side Cooperative Ministry was inaugurated on Palm Sunday in 1963. It began with a grant of \$5,000 from the Chicago Presbytery of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. for the purpose of making a corporate survey of the situation on the north side of Chicago. The survey resulted in the formation of the Cooperative Ministry. There are 26 participating congregations, including Presbyterian, United

Church of Christ, Reformed Church in America, Methodist, Lutheran, Evangelical United Brethren, and Church of Christ. Each congregation appoints representatives to the governing body. The activities, which the Cooperative Ministry has sponsored, include a Ministry to Youth, a Public Education Ministry which majors on tutoring of disadvantaged children, a Public Education Task Force, a Ministry to Young Adults, a Ministry for Racial and Social Justice, a Housing Task Force etc. Originally it was thought that some congregations might be asked to assume responsibility for certain functions on behalf of all, but it has not worked out in this way. The members of the organization seemed to prefer to set up cooperative ministries in each case.

This is not a Joint Action for Mission Project in the radical sense. There is no real sacrifice of sovereignty on the part of the participating congregations, nor is there a radical redeployment of resources. The member congregations make token contributions toward the support of the cooperative ministries ranging from \$25.00 to \$500.00, and in one case, \$1,000. Larger amounts are contributed from two or three denominational budgets. The North Side Cooperative Ministry does represent, however, an effort to bring a group of congregations out of isolation into a sense of common ministry relevant to the needs of the situation in which they are placed.

A number of other cooperative projects of a similar type have sprung up in other parts of Chicago. In St. Louis, MO, eleven congregations have formed the West St. Louis Ecumenical Parish on a similar basis. Here the situation was a little different. Because of redevelopment in another section of the city, the district of West St. Louis received a massive influx of Negroes, which increased the ratio of Negroes from 10% to 85%. The original members of the churches in the area had moved to the suburbs, and were facing a decision as to whether to move their churches to the suburbs with them. They decided that they should remain together and minister to the city because this was the time when the city needed them most. The Ecumenical Parish was established in 1961. A number of community activities and programs have been established as in Chicago, and there have been cooperative activities in Christian education, worship, and evangelism. The Parish has involved itself in local political issues in the area of education and public school integration. But once the churches had met the immediate crises of their continuing existence, there was some tendency for denominationalism to reassert itself in various ways. There is still much duplication of work and little integration of resources. One congregation turned to another state hundreds of miles away to find someone from its own denomination for leadership in a training campaign

when a qualified person might have been found in one of the other congregations in the Parish. Little has been done in the way of sharing staff, though opportunities for this might suggest themselves.

Another example of this type of development is to be found in a new section of Minneapolis called University City. One of the three Presbyterian congregations in the area, on the death of its minister, asked the Presbytery to help it define its mission. The Presbytery carried out an exhaustive study of the whole situation in the University City and recommended both the integration of the three Presbyterian congregations and the setting up of a University City Parish Board that would represent all the churches and agencies in the area. The Board has been formed, and is considering ministries in community planning and organization, ministry in vocational sectors, hospital chaplaincies, and a campus ministry.

Some long-range possibilities have been suggested which would involve restructuring in such a way as to give the University City Parish Board a dominant place in the administration of the work of the churches throughout the area. This would be an extremely interesting development, as it would mean a genuine sacrifice of some degree of sovereignty on the part of the participating churches.

Finally, mention should be made of the experiment to be undertaken in *Columbia*, Maryland, a new town still on the drawing boards, to be located between Washington and Baltimore. The developer of this project approached the National Council of Churches and asked for consultation as to how the development of the churches of Columbia could take place in an ecumenical pattern and in such a way as to relate most constructively and creatively to the life of the new community. The Executive Board of the Division of Home Missions of the National Council of Churches in March 1964, resolved, "That the new community in Howard County, Maryland, be designated as a pilot area for exploration of the best new forms of ecumenical ministry that can be cooperatively planned."

During the summer of 1964, two experts in church planning, Dr. Clifford Ham and Dr. Stanley Hallett, made a careful study of the possibilities and submitted a report with recommendations. This report was reviewed by the new Division of Christian Life and Mission of the National Council of Churches, and in January 1966, a Columbia Cooperative Ministry was adopted by the Division and sent for approval by the churches involved.

It was emphasized that, since this is to be a pilot project, great flexibility should be maintained. The methods and structures of interchurch

cooperation should have one primary focus: more adequate mission and ministry. They must be such as to strengthen and encourage ecumenical ministry. To this end, there should be shared facilities, shared finances, shared staff and shared administration. The relation of congregations to denominations and the participation of congregations in the wider mission of the churches through denominational channels is to be encouraged. At the same time, certain decision-making powers must be committed by the denominations to the structures of the Cooperative Ministry. The project will involve the development of a truly team ministry, with staff skills for a wide range of service including the pastoral ministry. Participating churches are asked to commit themselves to a "Congress of the Columbia Cooperative Ministry" made up of representatives from the congregations and denominations, with a "Cooperative Ministry Commission" to serve as the administrative instrument of the Congress. Eleven denominational bodies and two local churches have now signed the agreements. The constituting convention for the Congress was held recently.

## CONCLUSION

Our brief survey confirms what we said at the beginning. The rate at which Joint Action for Mission is being implemented is scarcely phenomenal. With the possible exception of Durgapur, India, some of the best examples of J.A.M. are in the United States, and the people who were responsible for developing these did not have the J.A.M. blueprint before them with its instructions regarding the various steps involved. In the areas of the world for which the proposal was originally designed, discouragingly little progress has been made. Vested interests are still too strong. The maintenance and extension of the denomination and its institutions seem to be of primary concern. Access to the traditional sources of support is a privilege not to be easily surrendered or shared.

We have noted that in a number of instances the challenge of a dramatically new situation has evoked a willingness to follow new patterns. In others, the discouragement of a deteriorating situation has driven the churches to seek an approach. Where this type of stimulus is not present, the desire for more effective manifestation of the unity of God's people in His mission does not seem to provide a sufficiently strong motivation to overcome the inertia of our traditional isolation.

We return to the question, which we raised at the beginning. Are we being too rigid in attempting to implement the J.A.M. formula with all its specifics and measuring every experiment in cooperation against it? Have we become Joint Action for Mission fundamentalists? Should we



not rejoice in every new development in cooperation between the churches without being so invidious as to enquire whether it goes far enough? Are we so sure that the Holy Spirit must always conform to the formulae that we laid down at New Delhi?

This argument admittedly carries weight. But I think that our review of the origins of the J.A.M. proposal indicated that there was a certain logic in the developments, which culminated in the formulation of this plan. Further, the individual elements in the plan seem to have their own validity. Take the idea of the joint survey, for example. In a world, which is changing so rapidly on all six continents, it is irresponsible simply to add bits of new work to the existing program of the Church without a radical reassessment of the total program to see whether it is relevant to the current situation. It needs to be a joint survey because it is difficult for us to be fully objective about that in which we are deeply involved ourselves; and at any rate, we shall come out with a distorted and one-sided picture if we take into account only the work that our own particular church is doing.

Furthermore, we need something that radically challenges our disunity. Church union may still be beyond us in many situations, but mere cooperation in a few specific enterprises is too superficial. It gives us a good, ecumenical feeling, but does not touch us at the vital points of our separate ecclesiastical existence. To the extent that this is true, cooperation that falls short of what is implied in J.A.M. can be negative rather than positive in its results. It is when we face the pain of redeployment, when Methodist or Presbyterian money goes to make Lutheran church members, or good Anglicans have to be surrendered to the ministry of a Baptist congregation, that we begin to learn that the mission is Christ's and not ours.

Joint Action for Mission is the test of our seriousness about the proclamation of the Gospel. If we are unwilling to make at least this minimum sacrifice of denominational self-interest for the sake of the advance of Christ's mission, it can only mean that we have elevated the denomination to the place of overriding importance in the mission, and the mission has, after all, becomes ours rather than Christ's.

What, then, can we do to further the cause? So far as the situation overseas is concerned, the mission boards have a clear responsibility. Many of the US mission boards have officially endorsed the J.A.M. proposal and informed the overseas churches to which they are related that they are willing to participate in any J.A.M. experiment. A few have taken the

position that this is as far as they can go. Some others have gone further and have attempted to bring some pressure on the churches overseas to move in the direction of J.A.M. This is not out of line with the best thinking among the churches of Asia today. The report of the Madras Situation Conference in 1963 made it clear that the mission boards should not be expected to play a purely passive role in the relationship of partnership. Initiative can be taken in either direction. It is quite in order for mission boards to inform their related churches that they are not enthusiastic about continuing to have the resources which they administer used in an isolated and uncoordinated manner for the advantage of a particular denominational program.

At the same time, the mission boards must recognize that their exhortations to overseas churches are quite hypocritical if their own churches are not prepared to practice J.A.M. themselves.

While we have been able to cite a few isolated examples of something approaching J.A.M. in the USA, the fact remains that the vast preponderance of the resources of the churches on this continent are used in a purely denominational way and for the advancement of denominational interests. Until this situation is reversed, we cannot talk to them with integrity about J.A.M.

Those who have any part in the training of the ministry are in a peculiarly strategic position at this point. What is needed is a generation of ministers coming out of our seminaries who refuse to be cast in the traditional molds, who have an allergic reaction to denominational competition and a consuming passion for the mission of Christ in its wholeness. This new breed is already beginning to appear. May it be fruitful and multiply!



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